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What Constitutes Spiritual Living?

By JOHN GODDARD

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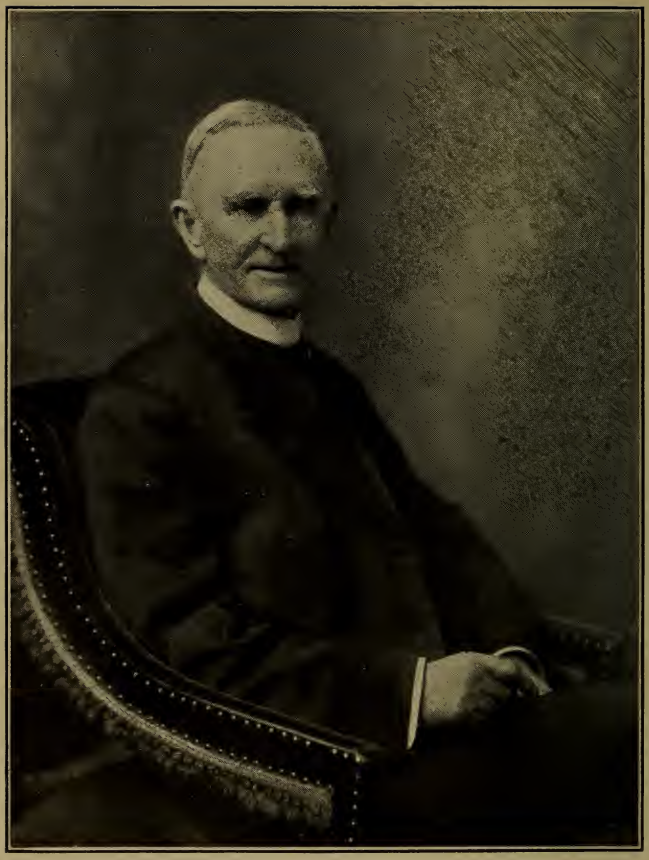

Sincerely yours
John Goddard.

What Constitutes Spiritual Living

And how can it be realized in the world to-day?

BY

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What Constitutes Spiritual Living?

What Constitutes Spiritual Living; and How Can It Be Realized in the World To-day?

I

THE solution of these questions requires the use of reason, but reason in spiritual matters must be based upon revelation, and thus upon the Bible, the Word of Him who is Spirit Itself.

In the Bible's last great prophecy, we read of a "new heaven and a new earth," that "the tabernacle of God is (shall be) with men," and that there will be "no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain"; but

"all things will be made new."[1] Not only a new heaven, then, but a new earth. The tabernacle of God shall be *with men*.

In more than one sense, this physical earth of ours, as man's dwelling place, has already been made new, largely through the discovery and application of nature's interior forces. If our grandparents could return and witness things which are already commonplace with us, would they not be tempted to call them miraculous, and to exclaim, "Surely, this is not the earth we knew?" And in their familiarity with, their faith in, and their great love for the Bible, might not its last promise and ideal picture come to mind? —"behold, I make all things new."

[1] Rev. xxi, 1–5.

And if they sought farther and looked deeper, they would find vastly more that would be new—a new activity of thought, with new practical applications. They would witness the freedom throughout nearly the whole world from chattel slavery, a new freedom and growing co-operation of the masses of the people in all lands in matters of government, a new and universal system of education, a new and world-wide spirit of philanthropy, a new religious toleration,—indeed, in almost every direction they would witness a complete revolution in what we may term practical human thought and life, when contrasted with a century ago.

But some changes would be likely to affect them with painful surprise. For

example, the huge warships and standing armies. As a contrasting picture, however, the "House in the Woods" at the Hague, and the International Court, might be a promising corrective. But, on the other hand, the selfish greed of the monopolists, seemingly willing to crush out competition at the expense of the loss of justice and humanity, the substitution of machinery for human skill, so hurtful, apparently, to the exercise of human freedom, tending to reduce the industrial masses to what often seems like a condition of helpless dependency, and to destroy the freedom acquired at such great cost—a condition in which the worker feels the lack of the human touch of the employer, and the employer the lack of

power to make use of the human touch in the presence of the demands of the corporation; the spirit, too, in the world of general business, which so often appears to make might the test of right, and success the standard of righteousness; the rule of the unprincipled politician in our cities, with its attendant bribery; the vastly increased wealth of the few, with the idleness, ostentation, luxury, pride, uselessness, degeneracy and folly which such wealth is apt to bring to the generations following, tending mightily to increase the obstacles to true earthly living by setting such an evil example, and to obscure if not to blind the eyes both of rich and poor to the meaning of spiritual living; I repeat, if our fathers could look

upon this picture of our modern life, would they not add to their comment respecting the prophecy of the new earth, this question, "But where is the tabernacle of God with men?"

We witness the masses of men turning from the church which, as they believe, is slow to rebuke these offences against right living, excusing itself by the claim that it deals with the things of the kingdom of God and not with the kingdoms of men. They are asking not, "What is right *spiritual* living," but "what is right *earthly* living, and how can it be realized?" They are turning from the church, and substituting labor organizations, socialistic political parties or moral reforms. They are asking, "why talk

about *spiritual* living, when the great problem of earthly living, respectable living, and sometimes even of decent living, remains unsolved?"

(1) What is spiritual living? Although we are taught to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven," and while we are to labor for the coming of that kingdom as well as to pray for it, this union of heaven and earth certainly does not mean the union of church and state. We must still render to Cæsar his things, and to God His things.[1] Jesus Christ is not to be a judge or divider over men.[2] The gospel distinguishes clearly between the religious and the secular. But it also tells us that we

[1] Matt. xxii, 21. [2] Luke xii, 14.

cannot live two separate lives, ruled by discordant motives. "No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and Mammon."[1]

Spiritual living is, first of all, living from spiritual motives. The motive life, which means the interior and secret life, is the vital force, the ruling factor, in all living. It decides what the outcome of our lives shall be in eternity. Let the actions be wholly right, yet if the interior or motive life be wrong, that is, ruled by a secret self-will instead of the Divine will or the Divine law, the life, however fair on the surface, is not a spiritual life.

The sermon on the mount furnishes

[1] Matt. vi, 24.

an illustration of the laws, or the highest laws, of the spiritual or motive life. While we may not say that the words, "resist not evil," and the direction to turn the cheek to the smiter,[1] will *never* be laws for the outer life, we cannot say, as did Count Tolstoy, that they are such to-day. But they do afford us a picture of what the Christian's motive life should be—that is, the life of love to the Lord and man. And it is set before us at the very beginning of the Gospel, as the ideal for which we should strive. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ and of fellow beings, not for what we shall gain by it, but for its inherent worth's sake—this is the highest definition of the spiritual life

[1] Matt. vi, 38, 39.

as far as the motives are concerned. There are lower forms of a spiritual motive, varying according as it flows more or less directly from its Divine source, such as, for example, the willingness to do right from a sense of duty or through self-compelling, in recognition of the Divine source of right. There may even be a sense of fear of the evil results of wrong living to self in another world mingling more or less with faith in a Divine Being without wholly destroying spiritual character. But to choose good or refuse evil merely because it pays in this world in the form of success, honor, reputation or wealth, is purely earthly, because lacking the conception of, the desire for, or the reaching after, the Divine,

which in a germinal form is the gift of the Heavenly Father to every child.

Specifically, then, spiritual life is the life of the spirit, or the motive of love to God or humanity, or else a motive of obedience to Divine laws of right because they are right, or else a motive of obedience to them through what may be called a holy fear, which acknowledges God.

Since in every case the motive life is the secret or hidden life, which can never be known except to the one who chooses it, *it follows that the spiritual life is personal, or individual.* It is not communal or racial. It cannot be created by legal enactment, nor by social adjustment alone. Education cannot attain it. Not

even spiritual culture can do more than prepare a way for it. Spiritual life comes down from above, not up from below. It is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will even of man, although the will of the individual man, responding freely to the will and call of God its Creator, is essential to its existence and growth. The laws of man cannot originate it, while they may help or hinder its progress or development. Socialism, whether it be in the secular or Christian form, cannot compass it. Outward improvements in community life will follow as a *result* of spiritual living, but will not, in themselves, be a cause of such living. Spiritual living is motive living based, directly or indirectly, on

voluntary individual connection with God.

A true spiritual life, then, is the interior, secret, motive life of the individual who responds to the Divine call from near or far.

But while spiritual life dwells essentially in the motive, it has no real existence, or no real growth or power unless it descends into the actions, and seeks to learn and strives to do, to the best of one's ability, the will of God on earth. He who has it will not be indifferent to those questions which involve the well being of mankind on earth. He cannot look upon suffering, especially innocent suffering, and remain indifferent or unmoved. He knows that it is his duty *as a citizen* to

study the questions of justice and right, and, not limiting his sense of right to his own individual and worldly interests, to conform his own course to a just decision, even if it involves a complete change in human activities and in social conditions in general, and his own in particular. He knows that he must act for the good of all. *While Church and State must be separate in a legal sense, they cannot be separated in the individual without spiritual disaster.* The spirit of God and of the world cannot rule in the same mind. *If one's spiritual life does not rule his actions, the spirit of self and the world must rule his inward life;* and this course, if persisted in, must drive out or prevent the entrance of the Spirit of heaven. The

true follower of Jesus Christ will be in the constant endeavor to bring his two warring natures into harmony. He will not make the prayer, "thy kingdom come," a mere form.

The Christian Church in its decline tended to separate the inner from the outer life. This tendency assumed two forms, one in Catholicism, the other in Protestantism. With the Catholic, almost exclusive emphasis was laid on the life of outward obedience to priestly command, and the power of sacrament, while with the Protestant, inward conversion by the Spirit of God was the chief evidence of regeneration, and the idea of good works, or of human co-operation as a *vital element of the spiritual life* was

almost universally condemned. But in the new Christianity the will of man must unite with the will of God, the outer with the inner. The device on the flag of the Christian soldier must be, "all religion is a matter of life, and its life is, to do good." But this will not obscure the idea that "no one can do good, which is really good, from himself."[1]

Spiritual living, then, includes two factors. First, an interior, secret, ruling love of righteousness, or unselfishness, which, more or less directly, is recognized as coming from God to the individual spirit. Second, the endeavor to realize this spirit, or to incarnate itself in all the purposes, the thoughts, the activities, of

[1] Doct. of Life, by Swedenborg, chapters i and ii.

the daily life in the world. It strives to bring the life of love to God and love to man forth to view. It seeks to overcome the obstacles which it finds, both in its own heredity and in the world outside. Love, kindness, purity, honesty, justice, truthfulness, that is, the Divine commandments, are its tests of conduct. The Golden Rule is its all embracing law in private dealings. The common welfare, as contrasted with selfish exploitation, is its standard in all its dealings with public questions. One who has this spirit believes in and trusts in the reality and presence of the unseen Helper. The ideal of life is to him a vision, not a pale and ghostly theory. He is strong in the presence of the selfish powers of earth.

He has his temptations, his weaknesses, his falls. Like Paul, he finds a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. Like Peter, he may, in seasons of provocation or temptation, deny his Master, but, like him, he returns with bitter tears to confess his fault and to say, "Thou knowest that I love thee."

II

Now how far can spiritual life be lived in the world to-day?

This question may be answered in two ways—from the point of view of the lower or of the higher life; that is, from the outer or the inner realm. We all possess, as human beings, germinal affections for this higher life, given to us (as we shall see later on) in our infancy and childhood. These spiritual elements come down from heaven. They are the gift of God. The most favorable environment cannot create them, nor can the most unfavorable destroy them.

These beginnings of spiritual life must be cultivated. Cultivation may take place by outward or by inward processes. We will think of the outward culture now, and first of all, through the creation of a favorable environment.

While a wrong social order cannot permanently destroy spiritual life, it can seriously interfere with its development. It is, therefore, the plain duty of every citizen to help in the establishment of a true economic system, or one which will promote the common welfare, in distinction from a system of special privilege. The effort on the part of the individual citizen to discover and establish such an order from

the motive of justice or love to men is one evidence of spiritual life. And notwithstanding all the manifold obstacles, can we not see that there is a force at work to-day tending to establish such an order?

While no social system alone can *create* spiritual life, it is far easier to *cultivate* a true spiritual motive and life in a society built upon a love for the common welfare. No spiritually-minded citizen can be content to remain passive, and fall back upon the idea, so often expressed, of the impossibility of changing human nature. For if Christianity means anything, it means this change. He will be glad that there are some who are giving their lives to the study of this great ques-

tion. He will, at least, recognize that they are preparing the way for the real presence of God in the world which the Bible promises, especially in its closing chapters, even when their motives *appear to* lack spirituality. Our Lord said of John the Baptist, who came to prepare His way, that the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he; and yet the prophet declared that but for that preparation, the coming of the Messiah would prove, not a blessing, but the opposite.[1] And so the Christian citizen, not confounding the secular with the spiritual, will bid God-speed to every effort which promises to bring earthly conditions into harmony with heaven. *There*

[1] Malachi iv, 5, 6, and Matt. xi, 14.

may be some even within the church, whom a high motive calls, whom conscience calls, whom heaven calls, to do this special work; who, like Luther, are compelled to say, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me." The spiritual life of such is bound up with their faithfulness to this call of duty. There may be those who, like Tolstoy, feel bound by conscience to interpret literally the spiritual ideals of the sermon on the mount, which most of us interpret as referring chiefly to the inner life of motive. For Tolstoy would resist no evil, renounce all property, all luxuries, and live on the coarsest fare. While this kind of obedience does not necessarily include an interior or spiritual motive life, yet it

may help to arouse thought which will, at last, bring about equitable social conditions, in which it will be easier than it is now to live a spiritual life, at least in the form of righteous deeds, and also of spiritual or unselfish motives, which spring from an inward recognition of a Divine Being and a Divine law of righteousness.

But few are called upon to be such leaders. The practical question is, how can average people, who are desirous to do right, especially in the realm of business, and in a world ruled in the main by the principle of selfish competition, combine the inner motive of unselfishness with corresponding or unselfish deeds?

There is a strong tendency to divorce the motive from the deed, or to substitute

for this inquiry a wholly different one, namely, "Can a business man be honest and be successful also?" That is, does it pay?

Even in the churches the question is quite sure to take this form; and when answered in the affirmative (as it generally is), it is likely to be the end of the matter. Even if it had the effect of making men honest in their actions, if they rest in the motive suggested by the words, "honesty is the best policy," of course, in following this motive, *they turn entirely away from the question* of how to live a spiritual life. For we have seen that a spiritual life consists, not of action alone, but first and chiefly, of a motive force of either love for God and man, or

else of duty based on Divine law, and secondly, of action *governed by that motive.* But when we reach the conclusion that honesty pays in this world's coin, and *for this reason* we do the honest thing, we leave out heaven and spirituality altogether. Then the spirit of hypocrisy in the deep meaning of the word is liable to enter, that is, the spirit which makes an outward show of right, but with a hidden purpose not far different from that which actuates the man of sharp practice.

And yet, while we are not to stop at the conclusion that honesty pays, there is a legitimate reason for raising the question of the possibility of success in Christian living. As we have seen, the Master

does not desire that His children shall go out of the world, but only keep from its evils. It is right to show that He has *not demanded impossibilities.* It is, however, of secondary importance, and will be only incidentally alluded to. We will return to our main question of how to live a spiritual life in the world of to-day.

There is one great, central, heavenly principle which has the power, if applied, to unite human law and heavenly gospel, motive and deed, religion and daily life—the law by which men as well as angels may live, namely, the universal *law of use* or *service.*

In obedience to this law we find the answer to the question of the method (as well as the possibility) of living a spir-

itual life in this world. Here is the main test of the right or wrong of all occupations, all actions, as well as all motives. As to an action, this law bids us ask, *"is it of use or service?"* As to the motive, *"am I doing it from a regard to service or use,* or am I wholly indifferent about the service to others, so it ministers to my selfish ends?" And this motive of being of service in his occupation joins heaven and earth in every person.

There are, of course, all kinds of uses or services—higher and lower, heavenly and earthly; uses for soul, mind, body; uses positive and negative, or those always necessary to human advancement and those permissible only on account of human frailty.

To make the principle plain, let us first look at it as an ideal.

Suppose a young man coming to maturity asking himself, as so many to-day, without any decided bent, are compelled to do, what shall be his life's work? If he is imbued with the principle of which we are thinking, he will seek to discover, first of all, what he is best fitted for. That means, where can such talents as he possesses be put to the greatest use, or be of the greatest service? He will not seek great things if he knows he is only capable of small things. He will not try to do what he cannot do well. He will not be ruled by the desire for great *returns* in wealth, or ease, or by the hope of a better social position, nor wish to displace

one better fitted than himself for a given position of usefulness for the sake of its honors or emoluments. He will not seek first the kingdom of this world, but the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Having found his work, he will devote himself to the thought of service in that work and with that purpose will labor with diligence, thoroughness and honesty, not merely with the motive of advancement, but more profoundly, yet mostly unconsciously, *with the thought of faithful service as an end.* Working in this spirit, content with the valid returns of service, living within his means, he finds inward satisfaction; indeed, the chief joy of life, in the peace which comes from the unseen realm to every one who is a faith-

ful steward of the talents, few or many, which the Master has placed in his hands for use.

Here is the ideal. Every one is capable of some real service. It is well if one is conscious of what his work shall be. It is well if he has a decided love of a given occupation. Nor is it incompatible with a spiritual life to cherish a love of achievement in that occupation—the goal which President Eliot set before his students. But *the love of an occupation* alone is purely natural or earthly, while *the love of use* in that occupation, that is, the love of service to the neighbor in connection with the occupation, is spiritual and heavenly. The love of mere achievement, too, is earthly, but the de-

sire to be of larger service through such achievement comes from heaven and leads back to heaven. Heaven grows in the soul of him who strives to be of service.

The laborer may work *merely* for his selfish reward in money and what money buys. He may seek to give as little and get as much as possible. All can recognize the gross selfishness of such a course in this case, for it is brought home to the commonest apprehension. It is more difficult to appreciate the selfishness in one who says to himself, "I may get the better of my employer for a while by idleness or negligence, but I shall ultimately be found out, and so I will give a fair amount of labor, or else I shall

lose my job." Yet the same selfish motive is present in both cases. But here, again, is a person who, apart from any spiritual principle, *loves to do a perfect piece of work.* It pains him to have it slighted, or to have bad work concealed. Of such a one we are almost tempted to say, "thou art not far from the kingdom of God." And yet more is needed than the love of a perfect piece of work. There is needed the joy not merely of perfect accomplishment, but the *joy of service* through that accomplishment. This joy is spiritual. It comes from heaven. It is heaven's gift, heaven's quiet token of the wondrous joys of God's kingdom of unselfish, loving service. It

comes to him who has been born again —born "from above."[1]

"Is this real, or is it imaginary?" perhaps one is asking. In reply: the writer knew a dairyman with an extensive business. Visiting him in the midst of his work, just after his work of inspection for the day was finished, and the wagons had gone out, he quietly remarked (in substance), while a happy expression appeared in his face, "I feel a deep sense of contentment, after I have sent out a load, that the product is as good as it can be made." Only the idea can be conveyed, not the expression nor the tone nor the atmosphere.

We all recognize the character of such

[1] John iii, 3 and margin.

a person, whether he be only a "servant in the house," or outside the house. Through his every act and word the motive and life of heaven shine. Each added year of life gives to the kingdom of heaven within a broader foundation, a larger growth. Heart, head and hands, the motive, the thought, the deed unite in the act of use or service, or love to the neighbor. Such a one will always have a work to do. If health and strength fail, there is always an asylum. And when he is gone, all are ready to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

But now we approach the more difficult question. There is a personal freedom possible to the laborer, the servant, the mechanic, and even to professional

occupations, which is not so possible to one in the mercantile or industrial world, especially if he be at the head of an establishment. He is largely subject not only to the law of competition based on selfishness, and to the base methods of unscrupulous rivals, but to the passing whims and meaningless, empty fashions of a fickle public, which is often better pleased with the unserviceable than the serviceable, with the counterfeit imitation than with the genuine, with the showy than with the useful. Not only in the methods of doing business, but sometimes *in the very nature of business itself,* there must often seem to be but limited room for the heavenly law of use or service.

There may be those who are strong enough, capable enough, influential enough to overcome all the temptations incident to a business life, or else independent enough to renounce it, change the occupation, or give it up altogether. But with the average man this is quite impossible. Comparatively few are entirely free to choose their occupation in the beginning, and perhaps still fewer are able wholly to control the methods which public opinion sustains or even compels. All who are engaged in lines of competitive industry agree that ideal methods are almost impossible in the present state of the world.

Here is a case in real life, although it is called exceptional. A young

woman, clerk in a dry goods establishment, is told to misrepresent the quality and age of the goods on the counter on penalty of dismissal. An aged mother and younger children are dependent upon her. Where does *her* greatest use lie?

The employer, on the other hand, says that he is compelled to these methods by competition. He must do as the others do or fail. One wrong always leads to another.

Neither employer nor employee is free. Here we observe the necessity of the establishment of a human law which shall support the law of heaven—a law which shall deepen and widen the construction of the statute forbidding theft, for theft

it is. Such a law, strictly enforced, would bring all to a common level, where the only competition would be that of service, which, of course, includes enterprise, activity, intelligence, and fitness for a given use.

But what, meanwhile, shall the suffering and helpless employees do? How does the law of service or use apply? They would ask whether it is more vital to serve the public morals or to serve their families? The answer is determined by the principle already mentioned, that the common welfare is more vital than that of the individual or the family, and especially where it is the welfare of the soul.

Certainly such sufferers should at least

never inwardly justify such wrong-doing. They should also secure other positions as soon as possible, nor scruple to make the reason known. Yet a few brave and stern refusals to yield to such demands, and a few public exposures, would soon result in a statute forbidding such a system of falsehood in all its forms. But here we recognize again the need of an earthly law to support the spiritual.

Yet we must remember that it is the community that is mainly at fault. No wide-spread evil can exist without public support. The whole responsibility does not rest upon the few immediate sufferers. Their spiritual life is dwarfed, but not destroyed by a *temporary* yielding to the wrong under what seems a cruel ne-

cessity. Only the destruction of the inner purpose or motive of right can banish the soul from heaven. Far better, however, if a few employers or employees were willing to be martyrs to the cause of right; then would the coming of God's kingdom be hastened. Under the conditions prevailing to-day, however, we cannot lay down rigid laws. Spiritual life is not wholly destroyed by wrong done under compulsion. Fatal evil is that which is chosen freely by the will, and defended by the understanding. "If ye were blind," said the Savior to the Jews, "ye would have no sin; but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth."[1]

It is possible for all to keep the perfect

[1] John ix, 41.

life before them as an end to be obtained. There is power in the affirmation and desire that it may be attained, while there is weakness in the negation that business and religion can never be reconciled, and that human nature cannot be changed. If the prayer that the kingdom of God may come and His will be done on earth as in heaven means anything, it means, or involves, the effort to live, or strive to live, as we pray. Instead of the attitude of negation, let the business man take the affirmative stand, and say, "business and religion may and shall be reconciled; I will keep on trying; I will do a little better to-day than yesterday; I will think more of service, and less of reward; I will substitute greater intelligence, en-

terprise, industry, economy, method, kindly and encouraging words to employees for all forms of deceit, cunning, trickery, harshness, or complaining." If their efforts to follow the heavenly law of service or to give an equivalent for value received do not yield great rewards in this world, the effort to be true will bring a reward far more satisfying. They will experience the fact that "a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."[1]

[1] Psalm xxxvii, 16.

III

The business life has been especially dwelt upon, because its temptations are greater or more constant than in most occupations. But now we turn to that form of the question, "how can the spiritual life be lived in the world to-day," which bears directly upon the culture of the inner or spiritual life, and the great compensations which it affords to those who, in a worldly sense, are called unsuccessful. It is recorded of one of New York's early multi-millionaires, whose touch turned everything to gold, that

on his death-bed, and unable to speak, he wrote on a piece of paper, "My life has been a failure." How shall we live so that, in that solemn hour, we may hear, not the voice of condemnation, but the voice which says, "Thou hast been faithful"?

In order to cultivate the inner or spiritual life directly, we need, first of all, a conviction, and, if possible, a rational conviction, of its reality. The means of forming such a conviction are, we believe, in the world to-day. We may know that man is a spiritual being; that human life, being essentially different from that of animals, requires another and higher plane or degree of mentality, which, according to a Bible illustration, we may

compare to the highest story or the roof of a house as separate and distinct from its lowest story,[1] or to a secret realm, deeply hidden *within* the outer and more conscious mind, called "the kingdom of God"—a kingdom "within you";[2] a kingdom which is like "treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man has found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."[3] It is this higher and truly human feature of life which makes the gospel writers speak of this world as a temporary place of sojourn, and not man's real home. It is not the mere question of a life after death, but of a higher degree of life within man's animal or lower

[1] Matt. xxiv, 17. [2] Luke xvii, 20. [3] Matt. xiii, 44.

nature, which is before us. The bird escapes from the egg, and is at once at home. The animal is born, and all knowledge necessary to its life is born at the same time. There are few or no mysteries to be explained. But the kingdom of heaven has mysteries.[1] Man is "a stranger in the earth," and needs to learn the law of true human life.[2]

But feeble as is this higher or spiritual realm of the soul, it exists in all. It is undeveloped. Its development requires human consent, human reason, human effort. But the beginnings of it are in all God's children. It is not only a *potential* or possible condition, but in our earliest life, before the age of freedom

[1] Matt. xiii, 11. [2] Psalm cxix, 19.

comes, the good angels are said to attend the little ones, and, led by the spirit of the Master, there are implanted in the depths of the then unresisting souls of children the dispositions to a pure and loving life, and the beginning of a faith in the higher realities. Here lies the reason for the child's readiness to accept the thought of God and of heaven, and his quick response to an appeal for kindness. Here we have the "good seed sown by the Son of Man," and here, too, we witness the work of the angels of the little ones, "who always behold the face of my Father."[1] And even adults, if pure in purpose, have similar angelic guides and helpers.[2]

[1] Psalm xcl, 9–13. [2] Matt. xiii, 37, and xviii, 10.

And so, while evil dispositions afterwards develop, partly from heredity and environment, and partly from the presence of evil powers from the unseen world,[1] yet with the growth of these tares sown in the darkness there comes the freedom of man, through the presence of the good seed sown in the light, and the power to resist the evil and choose the good. And while no one can live the perfect life; while the tares cannot always safely be rooted out, and must often remain until the harvest, yet there is always room for choice, both in action and in motive, and one is responsible to the extent, and only to the extent, that he possesses this freedom of choice.

[1] Matt. xiii, 38, 39.

With this thought of the beginnings of the kingdom of God with which all are endowed, and the freedom resulting, we will turn to the question of the means of a direct culture of the inner or spiritual life.

The power of the spirit in controlling the actions, recognized in all ages by philosophers, has received a new and peculiar emphasis to-day in the various forms of mental science. But this peculiar emphasis has been generally attended by a peculiar weakness, namely, the direction of mental forces to the healing of the physical body rather than to the healing of the far deeper diseases or evils of the soul.

There are various methods in which

all, through the power of the truth, may cultivate the inner or spiritual life directly, and the actions indirectly. The most universal form of the law of spiritual culture is told by the apostle to the Gentiles: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. . . . If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the spirit."[1] If we have the inner faith, the inner truth, the inner purpose, and if our effort is to preserve it alive, and keep it awake and active, the result will be, must be, to overcome the various lusts of the flesh. If our very "life," our deepest love, is in the spirit, our "walk," that is, our activities in this world, will be spiritualized, and it will be easy to

[1] Galatians v, 16, 25.

obey the laws of justice, service, or righteousness. As the same apostle says again: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."[1]

We need to become conscious, and in these days, rationally conscious, of our heavenly citizenship; conscious not only of the fact of a world and life to come, but of the nobler fact that we are created to become, by our own voluntary choice, citizens of a heavenly realm, ruled by a God of love, who yearns to give us of His own life, His own sweet rewards, if we, like Him, are willing to lay down our selfish life in all its forms, and learn

[1] Philippians, iii, 20, revised version.

the meaning of the new commandment to love one another.[1]

Instead of saying, "one world at a time," let us seek that spirit which will make the best of both worlds, and make of this life a schooling for a nobler existence. Instead of a sneer at "other-worldliness" as a deeper form of selfishness, we should remember that a true conception of the kingdom of God and its citizenship requires us to overcome all worldliness and selfishness, open or disguised. He who walks in the spirit

[1] There is really no excuse to-day for disbelief in a personal life after death, which is now almost scientifically demonstrated. We may with reason disapprove the methods of demonstration (there are good reasons for such disapproval), but one must be either blind or willful, or at least indifferent, to deny the fact to-day.

never masquerades. He walks in the light.

There are methods by which this inner life can be strengthened.

One of these is the right use of the first day of the week. Is there no significance in the fact that in the few short sentences which God is said to have spoken with His own voice in the hearing of all Israel as the constitution of His kingdom on earth, one of His "ten words" should be, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"? And while the Jewish form of observance is not ours, yet is it true that the presence on earth of the spirit of heaven requires that it should have a dwelling in time and space. There must be a suitable

season and a suitable place. Hence the Sunday and the church. Without these visible and recognized foundations it would be much more difficult, and perhaps impossible to preserve religion if not morality in the community. And may not the change of the Sabbath day from the last to the first day of the week suggest to us that we should "seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and that the great truths cultivated on the first day of the week should rule the conduct during the other six days? This of course does not mean that thoughts of the deep things of life should be limited to any given time or place, but only that they should not be deprived of this foundation. Every day should have

its serious moments, its seasons of reflection, self-examination, prayer and spiritual refreshment. And this suggests another means of spiritual culture, namely, meditation.

Religious meditation stands in bold contrast with religious culture as a mere external and, for the most part, public form, hurried through—a form of esthetics, or, at best, of ethics, which need not interfere with one's deep worldliness, and yet has power to lull the soul into a sense of security. But the religion of the Bible is more personal than public. The Psalmist prays, not only that the words of his mouth, but the meditation of his heart, may be acceptable in God's sight.[1]

[1] Psalm xix, 14.

He prays, "Give ear to my words; consider my meditation."[1] He cries, "O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day."[2] The first command given to Joshua was: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."[3] If we love the Lord's law, we shall surely meditate upon it. It will be a matter of personal interest to us. We shall think of it when we are alone, and in hours or moments of leisure. By such reflection the inner life is fed with

[1] Psalm v, 1. [2] Psalm cxix, 97. [3] Joshua i, 8.

spiritual nutriment; the soul gathers strength to resist the wrong, and do the right. And so the apostle writes: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."[1] The inner or spiritual life, and its power over the actions, require meditation. A good rule of life is that of one of the world's greatest men: "To read often and meditate well upon the Word of the Lord."[2]

Another vital element in interior spiritual culture is the preservation and strengthening of the Ideal Life. The soul of the Ideal, as already mentioned, is the gift of heaven to infancy and childhood. What is called the ideal state of

[1] I Timothy iv, 15. [2] Swedenborg.

youth is simply this early state coming to consciousness, fortified by right spiritual instruction brought in contrast with the developing heredity of worldliness. It is this which Wordsworth feels but does not attempt to explain in his noblest poem, "Intimations of Immortality from the Recollections of Early Childhood."

"Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison house begin to close
Upon the growing boy;
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows—
He sees it in his joy.
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;

At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

The Ideal (once the ideally Real) tends to fade away, but it must be made practically real, if heaven's hold on man is to continue.

We are living in what is called an age of Realism, in which the things farthest removed from the source and spirit of life are by the multitude seemingly regarded as the most real. The modern doctrine of evolution, which has appeared to teach that the upward trend of life comes through the law of Natural Selection, that is, of selfishness, tends temporarily, at least, to weaken faith in the power of the spiritual or the ideal. Man seems at first to be lowered through

this phase of natural science to the level of the animal. But the most modern of spiritual philosophers resists this view. He tells us that by recognizing an independent spiritual life, one's close connection with nature will have the power of lifting nature; that it is not natural science which leads us into naturalism, but the weakness of our spiritual convictions, the suspicion that there is perhaps no spiritual existence at all.[1]

Here, probably, is our chief difficulty —in the human heart, not merely faithless, but willingly faithless; relieved at

[1] Rudolph Eücken, "Problem of Human Life," p. 542. "Napoleon himself, the Arch-Realist, ascribed his downfall not primarily to the diplomacy of statecraft, or to the power of the bayonet, but to the resistance of the German Ideologists." Idem, p. 464. And he adds that Germany's recent progress is due to the same idealism.

the thought of escaping responsibility; welcoming the appearance that all is well; that human will has little to do with human progress; glad of the freedom to eat, drink, and enjoy; glad to repeat Pilate's despairing or sneering question, "What is truth?" The latest psychological dictum, that man is what he wills, is in accord with the noblest assertion of revelation: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself."[1] We can make the state of the world, or the superficial facts of science an excuse for doing as we will, or, on the other hand, we can follow our noblest thoughts, our highest

[1] John vii, 17, revised.

lights, or the ideals of childhood and youth, which are justified and confirmed not only by the highest reaches of revelation, especially in the divinely human life of the gospels, but by the best human experience in all ages.

Observe that in the revised and correct version of John vii, 17, the emphasis is laid on the inner life, and not merely on the action. "If any man *willeth* to do." Observe also the result of this inner state of the will: *"he shall know."* Keep the inner life pure, and so open to the unseen presences and powers, which bring intelligent conviction as well as strength. Spiritual realities will then become matters of knowledge rather than theory. They will be felt. And then one can

more easily put his trust in them. While he will not neglect in the least the duties of this life; while he will never relax his efforts to care for those dependent upon him, he will grow less and less *anxious* about worldly comfort, honor, or success. He will know that earthly deprivation may be the shortest road to real success. The words of the apostle will become luminous: "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; . . . while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the

things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." [1]

A true man may grow to be even more thankful for his disappointments and sorrows than for his successes or his joys. Whatever *finally* results in a more complete dependence on a Divine and loving Power is surely right.

But not only through the direct activities of the spiritual or religious plane of the mind, but by means of the secular plane as well, and apart from what we call practical life, may the interests of the higher life be subserved. There is a wide margin of choice in one's intimate companionships, books, conversations, or

[1] II Corinthians iv, 16–18, revised version.

diversions. All these necessary features of our earthly life may be made tributary to the noblest purpose, or they can easily be used to weaken or destroy it. If we cannot find the best, there is always a choice between the better and the worse. Or, whenever compelled by circumstances to associate for the time with people and things that are not of the best, it is possible, without ostentation, to uphold the right, the uplifting, the pure. A well-known example is that ascribed to General Grant. When one of a company was proceeding to introduce a questionable story, by the remark, "I believe there are no ladies present," the General is said to have responded quietly, "No, but I think there are some

gentlemen." There could hardly be a stronger rebuke, and yet no more brave or kindly one, more free from Pharisaic purism, or more likely to lead to helpful issues. Such opportunities are open to us all; and happy is he who can meet them in the spirit of the Master, without temper, or excitement, or blame, but in remembrance of our common infirmity, our common need, our common Helper. There may be such a thing as righteous anger, but there is something far better, which is told in the words: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another."[1]

[1] John xiii, 35.

IV

All that has been said respecting the culture of the inner or spiritual life may be summed up in the statement that the law of that life, even when we regard it as wholly apart from what we call practical affairs, is a thinkable, practicable, usable law. But it requires faith and love, patience and endurance. It is an appeal to the person. It can be fulfilled only by the devotion of the individual soul. Although a law, it cannot be obeyed by any mechanism of prayer, or words, or ritual. To obey it one must be alone. Nothing must inter-

vene between the heart and its Maker. Thus only can one realize the truth discovered by the penitent David: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou wilt make me to know wisdom."[1] Thus only shall we heed the wisdom of the wise man: "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."[2]

But while the two lives, the inner and the outer, have their distinct realms of activity, each independent of the other, yet there are times when they must be united as motive and action, as soul and body. The spiritual life is a life whose motive force consists in a belief in, and love for the life which the Lord Jesus

[1] Psalm li, 6. [2] Proverbs iv, 23.

Christ reveals, thus a life of love and service to fellowmen. The germ of this life, bestowed as a gift in early years, will grow like a seed warmed by the sun and watered by the rain, when we on our part are faithful. And we are faithful when we are obedient to the law of the Decalogue in the spirit of the new commandment of love in the gospel, whose constant and practical form is seen in the law of use or of service; and in the law of faithfulness to every duty involved in our occupation in life.

We recall the bright promise which the Divine revelation sets before us, especially in its closing chapters.[1] The evils of the world are but temporary. The

[1] Revelation xxi and xxii.

tabernacle of God is to be with men. Although clouds and darkness are round about Him, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ reigns. He is to come in the clouds (not literally, but spiritually), and reveal the glory of His wisdom and His love. All power is His in heaven and on earth.[1]

At times it is only possible for us to be true to the outer or literal law; that is, to *compel ourselves* in seasons of temptation to follow the rules of action revealed to us in earlier years, as right, as Divine. Obeyed thus, even self-compulsion leads on to spirituality.

Then there are seasons of cultivation of the inner or spiritual life directly;

[1] Matt. xxviii, 18.

through the culture of the ideal, through reading, meditation, worship, prayer, as well as through the best use of our freedom in all our leisure hours.

And then there are times when the inner and the outer life may unite in one —when love and faith inspired from on high can join in acts of loving use to men. And this will be more and more the case with those who, remembering that religion is a matter of daily life, strive to keep before them the need of this union of motive and deed, according to that grand generalization of human duty which speaks, like a trumpet tone, to every human soul in any and every condition and every age:

"He hath showed thee, O man, what

is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."[1]

[1] Micah vi, 8.

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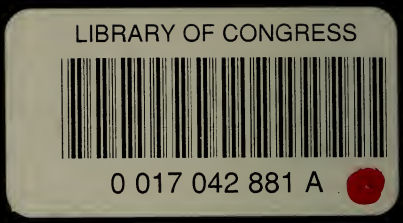
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